

CLASS WAR



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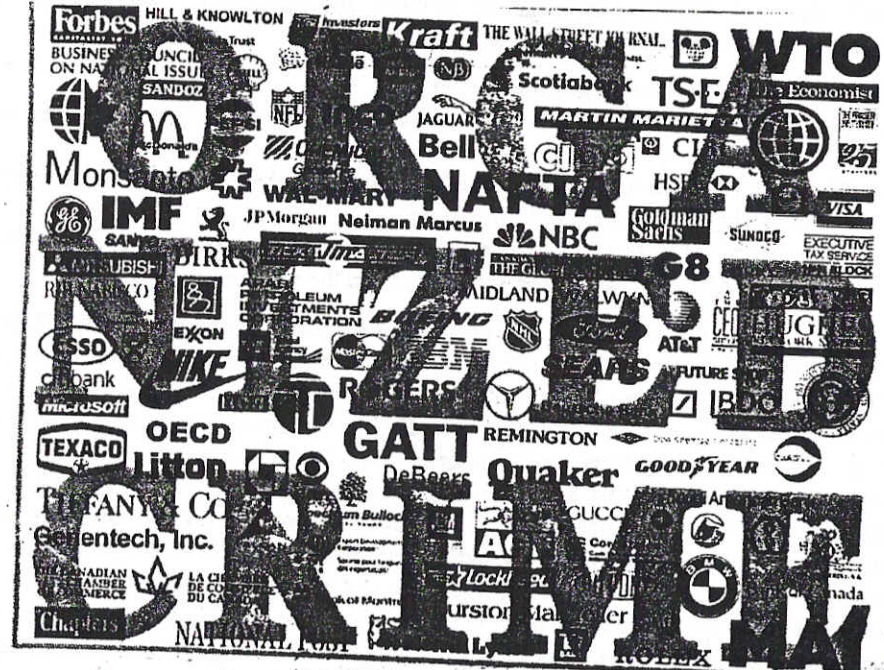


Resist



15

THE FREE TRADE AREA OF THE AMERICAS



It is the next largest step in globalization and corporate domination

It will extend the destructive policies of the WTO, NAFTA and the MAI.

It will liberalize trade barriers, ignoring all human rights and the environment.

It will affect over 800 million people.

SABOTAGE CAPITALISM

The Free Trade Area of the Americas is an agreement that will further merge the economic activity of all countries in this hemisphere into a single, centralized, homogenized model of development controlled by massive corporations.

At the Summit of the Americas (held in Miami on December 1994) 34 Heads of State in the Americas agreed to construct the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) to integrate the economies of the Hemisphere into a single free trade zone by 2005. Since then, this effort to fuse the economies has been ongoing. The FTAA aims to achieve the elimination of all tariff and non-tariff barriers (such as domestic laws) and achieve full market access. Since there are no traditional tariff trade barriers left in the Americas, the FTAA negotiations on services will focus on domestic deregulation: the elimination of local labor laws, public health standards, and environment protection legislation. According to Ms. Stephenson, (the deputy director for trade of the OAS) this will "imply modifications of laws and regulations, which make these negotiations more sensitive for governments."

The FTAA body involves 3 key components:

1. The 34 Trade Ministers of the western hemisphere develop the overall plan for the FTAA.
2. The 12 FTAA working groups, established by the trade ministers are responsible for gathering and compiling information.
3. The Vice Ministers of trade of the western hemisphere make policy recommendations to the Trade Ministers from the working groups.

Providing assistance to the working groups has been the work of the FTAA Tripartite Committee which consists of the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), the Organization of American States (OAS), and the United Nations economic commission for Latin America and the Caribbean. The IDB is a bank that has a history of funding mega-development projects such as dams that flood aboriginal land. The OAS, although it purports to be a human rights organization, is largely a cover for an enforcement tool of America's foreign agenda. It is known to employ corporate robber barons and human rights violators such as its Secretary General Cesar Gaviera who saw over 350 massacres under his presidency of Columbia. Also providing significant influence over the FTAA has been the Council of the Americas, founded by David Rockefeller 35 years ago in order to unite more than 200 corporations with more than 80% U.S. investments in Latin America into a common business front.

Thus, the Free Trade Area of the Americas represents the agendas of corrupt governments and corporations, not the interests of the 800 million people who will be deeply affected by this agreement. The negotiators are privileged elites who negotiate behind closed doors, working hard to implement the FTAA without opposition. On its web site, the FTAA invites "Civil Society" simply to "comment" on the process. The FTAA has also organized a Committee on Civil Society, but Ms. Stephenson (the OAS deputy director for trade) made clear that the single purpose of any consultation is it "may diffuse pressures related to issues of labor and the environment." In short, it's just a public relations exercise. Also enhancing the 'public relations' of the FTAA are the mainstream media, which are primarily owned by the same multinationals that will benefit most from FTAA.

Come to Quebec City in April 2001!! This is a call to action to oppose the Free Trade Area of the Americas April 2001!! Rise up against corporate domination over every aspect of life in the hemisphere!! Stand up against the oppression and commodification of human life and the earth. Shine the light on the power and wealth of the few at the top of the capitalist pyramid who exploit the growing majority. Expose and oppose the corporate/ military/ state agenda. Let's raise our voices and consciousness as people and communities. Let's demand not only that the systems we are fighting change (socially, politically, and economically), but that we will work together to build a better world that is fundamentally different from the one we oppose. Let's come together to demonstrate the power and vision of the people.

In April 2001, all the so-called leaders of North, Central and South America (except Cuba) will be in Quebec City to put the final touches on the Free Trade Area of the Americas agreement. For a few days, Quebec City will be turned into a militarized zone as these leaders, and their CEO pals, gather for a series of meetings, photo-ops and posh dinners. The Summit of the Americas is an opportunity for local and global activists from a variety of struggles to mobilize against a tangible example of the power of big capital, and corporate globalization.

Already several organizations in Quebec have begun mobilizing against the FTAA, ranging from unions and NGOs to grassroots groups who will be engaging in non-violent civil disobedience. Analyses against the FTAA, and capitalist globalization (more generally), range from those who wish to reform the trading system (social clauses, Tobin Tax, etc.) to those who challenge the underpinnings of capitalism itself.

There is a general desire to encompass as many groups and individuals as possible, representing a variety of tactics, while stressing decentralization, autonomy and affinity as organizing principles: to creatively, effectively and militantly oppose the FTAA, as opposed to engaging in lobbying or reformist strategies. **Communities all over the world will be holding events in solidarity or organizing to come to Quebec City. Where will you be in April 2001?**

For more information email resistFTAA@hotmail.com

Some helpful websites are:

Anti-FTAA

Anti-Capitalist Convergence: <http://anti-capitalisme.ctw.net>

French Coalition: <http://www3.sympatico.ca/jpduches/OQP2001>

Coalition to shutdown the FTAA/OAS: <http://www.tao.ca/~stopftaa/>

Pro-FTAA

Council of the Americas: <http://www.americasnet.net>

Official FTAA Website: <http://www.ftaa-alca.org>

Reconstructive Vision for the Future

<http://ise.rootmedia.org/>

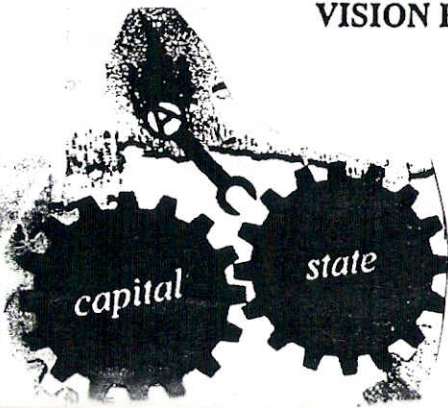
Is Life Possible Without Capitalism?

Imagine a world where everybody has enough to eat. Where regardless of your wealth you have what you need to survive. Where technology helps enable us to have enough time to what is important to us, instead of mandating our lives with 9-5 exploitive wage labor. Where you have enough time to love and nurture your children, enough time to educate yourself and build your community. Imagine a world where diversity is cherished. Where there are no classes, and ethnicities don't divide us. Imagine a world where market based relationships don't exist, and competition for survival and wealth are a thing of the past. Imagine a world where your community works together to feed each other regardless of people's abilities to produce. Where the streets are for sharing and learning, instead of fighting and profiting.

Imagine, instead of free trade, which benefits only the rich, a system of exchange, for technology, resources and ideas which enrich everyone's future, and help the world to live more prosperous fulfilling lives, through cooperation instead of competition. Imagine a world where hierarchies don't exist and people decide how their lives are run. Imagine a world where you have a voice and your status and wealth doesn't decide how you live, or if you live at all. Imagine a world where there is no status and wealth, except for the wealth and beauty of your lives.

Life is possible without capitalism!

**IT'S TIME TO TAKE PART IN A RECONSTRUCTIVE
VISION FOR THE FUTURE!**



The FTAA and the WTO

The FTAA is an extension of WTO provisions. Its goals are congruent with the WTO provisions to further the liberalization of trade. It will also add new laws to increase the rights of corporations and their control over public policy. All current member nations of the FTAA are also members of the WTO.

What's the problem?

"The WTO is the primary rule-making regime of the globalization process. In only five years of existence the WTO has come to rival the International Monetary Fund as the most powerful, secretive, and anti-democratic international body on earth."

First of all, this organization was formed in 1995 by an agreement among 125 (now 134) countries. The member nation's goals were essentially to eliminate trade barriers for greater ease in moving capital across borders. They administer trade agreements, facilitate future trade negotiations and oversee and enforce trade dispute resolutions. WTO operates on the grounding principle that their global commercial interests should be prioritized over all others, in other words, anything that inhibits free trade are suppressed such as environmental laws, consumer rights, and social justice issues.

WTO provisions place economic values higher than social, democratic and environmental values. It has "legal personality" with an international status equal to the United Nations. If labor agreements, environmental laws, human rights laws, impede trade then it can successfully be challenged by the massive judicial power of the WTO as an "illegal barrier to free trade". The WTO allows corporations the ability to sue a nation through the Dispute Settlement Body (DSB) provision. For example if a country had a law that would ban genetically altered food then that law could be challenged by the WTO as a barrier to trade and investment. Corporations have never lost a case under the WTO provisions. Countries (often the poorer, smaller nations) were given an ultimatum: either accept the provisions or risk losing rights to the global trading system. Most countries ratified the agreement through purely executive order, with absolutely no public input or awareness. Ralph Nader offered 10,000 dollars to any senator or congressman that would actually read the WTO agreement before voting it in. One senator took him up on the offer and then changed his vote from "for" to "against". Most didn't even read the whole agreement.

The greatest effect that this economic globalization has had is the incredibly large transfer of economic and political power away from the and into the greedy palms of global corporations and the bureaucracies that helped create it. Since this is the period of the most hyper global economic activity ever seen in history, the gaps between the poorest and the wealthiest societies have never been so great.

"We are writing the constitution of a single global economy...The question is where - not whether- work on trade and investment should take place."

Renato Ruggiero, Director-General of the WTO

NAFTA: A Preview of the Free Trade

Disaster...

The North American Free Trade Agreement was passed in 1994, abolishing tariffs between Canada, Mexico and the United States. NAFTA liberalized capital flows and eliminated regulations on foreign investment, paving the way for U.S. multinational corporations to take complete advantage of Mexico's labor and natural resources, leaving hundreds of thousands without jobs in the United States and in Canada. Since the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) plans push NAFTA further into the two-thirds world, we can expect the same disastrous effect on the rest of the South, that NAFTA had on Mexico.

One year after the enactment of NAFTA, the Peso crashed. After this devastation, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the U.S. Treasury insisted that Mexico continue to fulfill its obligation to NAFTA and liberalize its investments, making it impossible for Mexico to stabilize their economy. Since NAFTA came into effect, free trade zones have been established on the U.S.-Mexico border where maquiladoras (sweatshops) offer low-paying jobs with no benefits and horrible working conditions. This amounts to the legalization of slave labor. Between 1995 and 1998 approximately 2 million Mexicans lost their jobs; the effects are especially felt in the South where unemployment is rampant. The purchasing power of Mexican citizens making minimum wage decreased by 24% and competition of imported goods expanded, sabotaging small and medium sized businesses. Under the Free Trade Area of the Americas, the same trends of economic turmoil can be expected throughout Central and South America and in the Caribbean, where many economies are already unstable.

In order to comply with NAFTA regulations, Mexico revised or eliminated environmental and agrarian laws. Subsequently, communal lands for campesinos (peasants) that were established under the ejido system can now be privatized and limits on commercial land size holdings have been abolished. Countries throughout the Americas will be forced to rewrite or abolish laws to become FTAA compliant, undermining basic human rights and the environment.

POWER POLITICS

After WWII, America had already cornered 50% of the world's wealth largely from arms and other exports during the war. American postwar planners like George Kennan realized right away that it was going to be vital for the health of U.S. corporations that the other Western Industrial Societies reconstruct from wartime damage by importing US manufactured goods, thus providing investment opportunities. The American State also had to figure out how to disguise its growing power from the people.

Kennan said in 1948:

"We have about 50% of the world's wealth, but only 6.3% of its population... In this situation, we cannot fail to be the object of envy and resentment. Our real task in the coming period is to devise a pattern of relationships which will permit us to maintain this position of disparity. To do so, we will have to dispense with all sentimentality and day-dreaming and our attention will have to be focused everywhere on our immediate national objectives... We should cease to talk about vague and unreal objectives such as human rights, raising living standards and democratization. The day is not far off when we are going to have to deal in straight power concepts. The less we are then pampered by idealistic slogans, the better."

Following the public relations trend of 50 years, the FTAA claims to support all the 'sentimentalities': human rights, raising living standards and democratization; however their aim is grounded in very real power politics and economics: the U. S. has historically considered the Latin American markets to be its own. Now, because of economic globalization, other economies are forcefully entering Latin America, and the U.S. is looking to regain its hegemony. The major interest of the U.S. corporate/military/state alliance is to corner the Americas' resources and markets and the FTAA is one of the tools with which it can achieve this goal. Many of the Americas' national governments in addition to promoting the interests of their national, multinational and transnational corporations, are also largely acting as instruments of the U.S. foreign policy to move the FTAA process forward. Under capitalism, the American Corporate State is the first truly global power on earth.

The FTAA in the Shadow of the MAI

The FTAA negotiating groups are already drafting what they call "bracketed" texts covering the full scope of the FTAA. Each of the nine Negotiating Groups has begun its work, and is on schedule to complete the tasks assigned to it on time with the following approximate goals:

Market Access: To ease corporate access to local markets by eliminating non-tariff trade barriers (certain domestic laws) and by privatizing public services and industries.

Subsidies and Technical Barriers to Trade: To eliminate non-tariff barriers to trade that interfere with trade liberalization, such as environmental regulations and agricultural subsidies.

Anti-Dumping and Countervailing Measures: To eliminate subsidies on local commodities and services such as agriculture or business so that multinational corporations can get into local markets more easily.

Intellectual Property: To seek more enforced protection for intellectual property of corporations (i.e., patents on seeds, life, genomes, medicines and cyberspace).

Government Procurement: To remove public guidelines on imports (such as domestic content laws).

Sanitary and Phytosanitary Standards (SPS): To create a hemispheric agreement on food safety issues around pesticides and genetically engineered foods.

Smaller Economies: To facilitate the adjustment of developing economies for integration into the FTAA.

Dispute Settlement: To build on existing dispute settlement procedures (such as under the WTO) and to develop arbitration mechanisms for rulings on violations of the FTAA agreement. Unlike under NAFTA and WTO, corporations will not require backing from their nation to challenge other governments.

This agreement will give corporations extraordinary enforcement powers to coerce and force compliance (by means of trade sanctions and huge penalties which will force even large countries to yield).

Once drafted and signed, the FTAA agreement will be very much influenced by existing trade agreements (i.e., WTO, GATT, and GATS). The General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) is presently being negotiated to redefine 'services' to include water, waste, education, and health care so that multinational corporations must be free to own and operate these sectors. Additionally, this development would mean that all the public services now being defined as tradable services under GATS would then fall under the rulings of the WTO, GATT and the FTAA.

Who Will Be Affected By The FTAA?

The FTAA is another death sentence for indigenous peoples, the poor and the environment through its design to expand trade without borders throughout the Americas.

The full impact of this agreement will be felt by the hemisphere's most marginalized populations; people of color, women, and the poor. In the Americas, 210 million people live in poverty. The ravages of colonialism are now leading directly to the ravages of neo-colonialism in the form of corporate globalization, with more and more maquiladoras (sweatshops) and plantations setting up in the two thirds world. Young women are especially affected as they represent a growing majority in the maquiladoras. Meanwhile, neo-liberal financial institutions like the World Bank/IMF and trade bodies such as the FTAA continue to push the agro-export model of development. But while this model usually produces an "economic miracle" where GNP goes up, much of the population ends up starving. After 15 years of these failed policies, Mexico exports nearly 60% of its food. Neo-liberal capitalism has hurt local business too. Since the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) was first implemented, nearly 2 million small businesses have closed in Mexico.

Because of the debilitating costs to mass numbers of people, popular opposition has developed. This opposition has been largely repressed wherever possible. In the Americas, the US is there to supply military and implements of terror (e.g., Mexico has received 7500 humvees from the U.S. to use against the Zapatista Army of National Liberation, and other indigenous communities). These communities have armed themselves for what they knew would be the end of their land and way of life with the implementation of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). Today their land represents a strategic area, containing the most important oil reserve in Mexico, and has been placed under martial law. Mexico is in turn, aggressively seeking markets in Central America along the lines of the US free trade plan. In Guatemala, the military (trained at the School of the Americas in Georgia) rampaged through indigenous communities, massacring and raping villagers, to make way for a hydroelectric project sponsored by the World Bank (WB) and Inter-American Development Bank (IDB).

In several countries in the Americas, the "War on Drugs" has been a front for American sponsored state terrorization of any resistance from the people. In the past, the US has sponsored military coups to try to gain control of the resources, labor, market, and ultimately the country itself. In the late 70s alone, 200 000 people were murdered by U.S. backed forces in Central America. Achievements made in the Americas by the United States in the past 15 years are a major tragedy, not just because of appalling human cost, but also because a decade ago there were prospects for real progress toward meaningful democracy.

"We are in the middle of the Forth World War, which is the war of big business and the governments- that are the corporations' tools-against a large part of the world's population. They are killing with hunger and poverty; they are killing the planet."

-Subcommandante Marcos of the Zapatistas

Who Benefits From the FTAA?

Hemispheric free trade will open a market of 800 million people, embracing 34 countries with a combined domestic product (GDP) of US \$10 trillion. Who does this benefit?

All recent research confirms that only a small number of people at the top of the global corporate pyramid-CEOs of global corporations and a small number of upper management experience significant benefits from all the growth, expansion, mergers and consolidations created by globalization.

Globalization in the modern era emerged directly from a set of institutions (e.g. GATT and WTO) and rules created with a specific goal: the primacy of capitalist economic values above all human values. Key characteristics of trade liberalization or economic globalization include: free trade, deregulation and privatization and the rapid commodification of every aspect of life. This includes the few remaining elements of nature that have thus far been out of the trading system: culture, education, fresh water, seeds, and the genetic structures of life.

The process of Economic Globalization involves the most fundamental redesign and centralization of the world's political and economic arrangements since the Industrial Revolution. The Free Trade Area of the Americas is another tool of economic globalization which will give corporations alarming power over all people who live in the Americas.

The Multilateral Agreement on Investment: a model for the FTAA

The MAI is an international commercial treaty that applies the extreme deregulatory agenda of the WTO to the few vital economic sectors not already covered by the WTO rules. This would include: where and under what terms investment in manufacturing and services could be done, trade in currency and other financial instruments such as stocks and bonds, and ownership of land and natural resources. Negotiations were conducted by 29 of the wealthiest nations in the world. The plan is for the rich countries to set the rules and then offer the treaty on a take-it-or-tough-luck basis to developing nations.

How could such a gross expansion of corporate power escape public outcry?

More than three years after the beginning of negotiations to establish an immensely powerful and comprehensive Multilateral Agreement on Investment, the public was still kept unaware of their plans. Negotiators did their best to keep the trade negotiations secret- it was kept unreported in major news media in the US for two years. But in 1997, citizen groups succeeded in shedding some light on the MAI; it was finally scrutinized by lawmakers, citizen's groups, environmental groups, and labor unions in various countries. The attention forced debate and public interest considerations to be answered, thus stalling the 1997 completion of the MAI. In December 1998, negotiations of the MAI were ceased- an exciting victory that proved that citizen activism can still beat the transnational corporate agenda. Now, the FTAA is seeking to revive the MAI's corporate agenda.

What is the corporate agenda for the global economy and what rights do speculators and multinational corporations demand?

- The right to compete against domestic companies in all economic sectors
- The right to acquire any business or property in any economic sector, including natural resources and strategic industries such as communications and defense.
- The right to convert currency and move money across borders without constraints, fostering the sorts of currency crisis that collapses the Mexican peso and caused the recent Asian financial meltdown.
- The right to move production facilities without limit or penalty, regardless of their impacts on workers or their host community.
- Freedom from conditions (called performance requirements) placed on investment to country speculation to ensure that corporations meet basic rules of conduct;
- The right to sue governments for cash damages (paid from public funds) for restitution if an investor claims its rights have been violated under the agreement.